



## Wildland Fire Chemical Clean-Up



Many of the same suggestions and precautions may be of use for all categories of wildland fire chemicals. Specific suggestions are given for foams and water enhancers (gels) when they differ from those given for long-term retardants.

Long-term retardants are typically applied from fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters.

### People:

- Retardant contains ammonia and will sting if it gets into cuts or scratches or comes into contact with chapped or sunburned skin.
- Wash thoroughly with a gentle soap and water to remove all residues as many of the fire chemicals are drying to the skin.
- After washing use a good quality hand cream to minimize drying and chapping.

### Structures (wood / metal):

- The red color of retardants comes from iron oxide (rust) which can be very stubborn to remove.
- Wash retardant off as soon as possible. Some of these products may discolor metal.
- Dampen a stained surface with water and scrubbing with a stiff-bristled brush dampened and dipped in borax has been effective.
- Power washers may drive the red colorant into the surface of the wood and should generally be avoided.
- Restrict water use to prevent puddles which may be attractive to pets.
- Avoid leaving standing puddles of water by using absorbent materials such as sand, soil, or other materials.

### Vegetation:

- Rinse retardant off vegetation. Avoid leaving standing puddles of water by using absorbent materials such as sand, soil, or other materials.
- Leaf burn may occur since retardants contain levels of fertilizer higher than what is often sold at garden stores. This causes vegetation and plants to appear dead after contact. However, they will generally recover and grow back - usually within one to two months.
- As with any garden produce, wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly before using.

### Pets & Other Animals:

- Shampoo thoroughly as many of the products are very drying to skin.
- Use materials that will effectively absorb any puddles after shampooing, or in areas that animals may have access to. Materials such as sand / soil / or other absorbents should be used on any standing water or puddles.
- Avoid ingestion of water – keep animals away from puddles.
- If your pet appears ill from drinking out of puddles or standing water, make sure your veterinarian knows the animal may have ingested a fertilizer-based product.

**Class A Foam products are frequently applied from ground equipment.  
They may be applied from helicopters and some fixed-wing airtankers.**

- Class A foams are strong detergents similar to those used for hand-washing dishes. They are generally easy to clean-up.
- If a fire was close enough to bake the foam onto windows, scrape the residue off with a paint scrapper.
- Treatment of persistent residues with a tub and tile cleaner designed to remove soap residues may be effective.
- Keep pets away from the area.
- Avoid ingestion of water by pets and other animals – keep animals away from puddles.
- If your pet appears ill from drinking out of puddles or standing water, make sure your veterinarian knows the animal may have ingested a detergent-based product.

**Water Enhancers may be applied from ground equipment and by aerial application.**

- Water enhancers contain very efficient water absorbers similar to those used in disposable diapers.
- These products tend to be very slippery and hold water in place for several hours to several days. After the product has dried, it may become wet and slippery again if exposed to water.
- They may be difficult to wash off of buildings and equipment due to the oils in the formulations.
- For new structures or others with siding and paint in good condition, a power washer with a good, degreasing detergent may be of use.
- For structures with older siding or surface treatments or log structures, dampening the surface and scrubbing with borax and a stiff bristle brush is preferred to minimize damage to the surface.
- If your pet appears ill from drinking out of puddles or standing water, make sure your veterinarian knows the animal may have ingested a product containing super absorbent polymers.